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# What Retail Foodservices Should Know When Purchasing Local Produce Directly from Farmers

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## Want to know more?

Contact these groups.

- Buy Fresh Buy Local:  
Iowa program—  
[www.practicalfarmers.org/programs/buy-fresh.html](http://www.practicalfarmers.org/programs/buy-fresh.html)  
National program—  
[www.foodroutes.org](http://www.foodroutes.org)
- City or county health inspector
- Food Alliance—[www.foodalliance.org/](http://www.foodalliance.org/)
- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship—  
[www.iowaagriculture.gov/](http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/)
- Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals—[www.dia.iowa.gov/food](http://www.dia.iowa.gov/food)  
515/281-6538
- ISU Extension Distribution Center—  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/store](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/store)
- ISU Hotel, Restaurant, and Institution Management Extension: local foods—  
[www.iastatelocalfoods.org](http://www.iastatelocalfoods.org)
- Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture—  
[www.leopold.iastate.edu](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu)
- Produce Marketing Association—  
[www.pma.com](http://www.pma.com)
- United Fresh Produce Association—  
[www.unitedfresh.org](http://www.unitedfresh.org)
- United States Food and Drug Administration: “Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables ”—  
[www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/GuidanceDocuments/ProduceandPlanProducts/ucm064574.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/GuidanceDocuments/ProduceandPlanProducts/ucm064574.htm)

These resources focus on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPS):

Cornell University Good Agricultural Practices Project—  
[www.gaps.cornell.edu](http://www.gaps.cornell.edu)

New England Extension Food Safety Consortium—  
[www.hort.uconn.edu/ipm/foodsafety/index.htm](http://www.hort.uconn.edu/ipm/foodsafety/index.htm)

United States Department of Agriculture—  
[www.ams.usda.gov/fv/fpbgapghp.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/fpbgapghp.htm)

University of California-Davis  
Postharvest Technology Research and Information Center—  
<http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu>



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# What retail foodservices should know when purchasing local produce directly from farmers



*Chef Chris Hansen (Cottage on Broad in Story City, Iowa) and producer Joe Lynch from Ames, Iowa*

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
University Extension

Purchasing fruits and vegetables from local producers is one way to be sure products are fresh. It also helps the local economy and raises patron awareness of food sources.

As the person in charge of a licensed foodservice establishment, you have a responsibility to ensure the safety of foods served. While most fresh produce is not classified as a potentially hazardous food, media reports of outbreaks of foodborne illnesses from raw produce raise public concerns. Follow these steps to demonstrate reasonable care has been taken to ensure safety of purchased foods.

## **STEP ONE: Investigate**

It is appropriate to ask anyone selling fresh produce the following questions.

### **Farm and production practices**

- Is water tested annually and are test records on file?
- Is potable water used for food and food contact surfaces?
- Are wells and other water sources protected from contamination (e.g., manure, livestock, chemicals, or pets)?
- Are food contact surfaces in the packing area clean and sanitary?
- Are packing materials kept clean and free from contamination?
- Are food products kept at appropriate temperatures?
- Are food products cleaned?
- Is a pest control program in place?
- Is the food product packing facility enclosed?

### **Worker health and hygiene**

- Are workers trained about proper sanitation and hygiene practices?
- Are handwashing facilities available to workers?
- Do workers wash hands at appropriate times—before packing and after using the toilet, smoking, or eating? (Those harvesting food items should be considered food handlers.)
- Do workers limit bare hand contact with foods after harvest?
- Are workers excluded from handling food products if they are ill or have a fever or diarrhea?
- Do workers put on clean aprons after harvesting to wash and pack products?
- Are different gloves worn for harvesting and packing?

## **STEP TWO: Communicate**

Discuss the following with the producer before agreeing to purchase.

### **Organizational requirements**

- Does your organization require prior approval of new vendors? How long does the process take? What is required (e.g., delivery or insurance coverage)?

### **Product specifications**

- What is the desired variety, quality, size, and unit of purchase?
- What types of alternative products will you accept? How much warning do you need if a substituted product will be delivered?
- What is your expectation for product packaging to protect integrity of food items? (Large garbage bags are not acceptable.)

### **Ordering procedures**

- How far in advance will the producer be able to tell you about available product(s)?
- How can you place your order? (e.g., phone, FAX, or email?)
- What should the producer do if (s)he is unable to complete the ordered amount or quality? When do you want to be told?
- What is the price and unit of costing?

### **Delivery procedures**

- When is the best time for orders to be delivered to your establishment?
- How frequently do deliveries need to be made?

### **Payment procedures**

- How much lead time is required by your accounting office to add vendors?
- What is the timing for payment of invoices?

## **STEP THREE: Promote**

Telling patrons that you use locally grown foods can be an effective marketing tool.

- Identify food sources on published menus – e.g., Apples from Pat's Orchard.
- In a school setting, visit with classroom teachers about using local foods in lessons.
- Feature locally grown foods in specials and mention them in advertising.
- Make table tents, posters, and other displays to show where the food products you use are grown and/or how sustainable production methods were used.
- Report your efforts in working with local food producers to managers and organization leaders.
- Share information about your use of local food products with others, including local media contacts.